

**VERBATIM MINUTES OF THE FERRY SURVEY CONSULTANT SELECTION
MEETING
WASHINGTON STATE TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION
September 28, 2007**

The special conference call meeting of the Washington State Transportation Commission was called to order at 10 a.m. on Friday, September 28, 2007.

Chair Ford called the meeting to order and requested Commissioner roll call:

Commissioners participating in the conference call were: Chair Ford, Ed Barnes, Bob Distler, Elmira Forner, Carol Moser, Dan O'Neal and Dale Stedman indicated presence.

Reema Griffith, Executive director indicated that Commissioner Distler would be joining the group momentarily.

Chair Ford

Why don't you go ahead and give us a briefing on what's happening.

Ms. Griffith

Dick....Bob was going to do an overview....Tammy Grant on the line....as soon as we get Bob on the line he is going to touch base with you on who the selected consultant was based on the interviews that were held on Tuesday. Just so all of you know, we had four proposals....Commissioner Distler on the line....Bob I'm going to let you take over, because we have started the meeting.

Chair Ford

Okay....We already called it to order go ahead and tell us what you know.

Commissioner O'Neal

One thing that you need to know though there is of course members of the public on the phone with us.

Chair Ford

That's correct - we understand.

Commissioner Distler

That's fine. I wanted to tell everyone about the meeting that we had on Wednesday with the people that we had decided to interview. You are familiar with the RFP. We had a number of respondents. The selection group was able to divide the respondents more or less into two groups; those we wanted to talk to and those who we felt based on their written submissions would not be fruitful to continue to speak with them. Those that we did speak with we had rather extensive presentations by them, and then we had a Q & A session. In the group that actually participated were representatives from the House and Senate Transportation Committees, a representative from Washington State Ferries, myself, Reema and then our market and survey advisor that we have as part of the survey team. The team recommended by a strong majority vote, and I will talk about that in a

moment, that Northwest Research Group be the apparent successful bidder with regard to the survey. And I said that I would speak about the responses of the groups. One of our team members was of the opinion that another group we spoke with would be somewhat more responsive to our needs, but that related to one specific aspect of the presentation, and I think that person is now, in fact I know, that person is comfortable with the selection. We scored these people on a number of areas, that is their, in particular their understanding of the goal of the survey and the areas of investigation although obviously this require a significant amount of further consultation with the survey group and with the Commission. The technical proposal itself--what they intended to do, how they intended--the typical validity and understanding and transparency of their work so that we would be able to present and champion it to those other parties that are interested in it. We took into account some of things that they told us regarding possible modifications to the specifications in the RFP and then we got more into detail with regard to the actual nuts and bolts of the process: the focus group idea, the overall survey idea and the vetting of a panel to take us forward if we want to get back to some of these people. We relied very heavily on their explanation to us and our ability to understand the means by which they would eliminate bias and eliminate statistical risk with regard to this, although of course, despite what statisticians will tell you that is somewhat of a art as opposed to science. Finally, we looked at their management structure and their management proposal and the timeline and the means and indeed be the gist of them going forward with this effort. As I said at the end of the day it is our strong recommendation, in fact I would say it is our unanimous recommendation that the Northwest Research Group be selected to go forward with this process. We are very comfortable with their overall understanding of the effort as well as with their structured approach to the effort in a relatively short timeline.

Commissioner Stedman

Where are they located?

Commissioner Distler

They are located in Boise, Idaho and they have an office in this area.

Commissioner Stedman

Their headquarters are in Boise?

Ms. Griffith

Yes.

Commissioner Forner

I will make a motion to approve Northwest Research Group as our consultants for the Ferry Survey.

Chair Ford

Is there a second?

Commissioner Moser

I'll second that.

Chair Ford

Are there any further questions of Bob on this issue?

Commissioner Stedman

I have one question only dealing with....I couldn't find within the material that I've read through what the time element is on all this.

Commissioner Distler

They have submitted a proposal, of course that can be subject to change, they are going to get started right away. One of the concerns that we have is that by trying to finish by the spring we will potentially overlook some of the recreational users, so we are going to have to talk about that further. The timeline that they have provided us really....the research plan right away, talking about the methodology and some of the additional qualitative research will be done in the November/December time frame, and an analysis of that can basically can be done over the holiday period. The quantitative research with regard to design, setup and the major survey work gets done in December, January and February. Setting up the panel going forward moves all the way into July, but the timeline they submitted to us including the phase two work really winds up in July. I think that the answer is once we have some of the quantitative research under our belt we will have some fairly good understanding of some of the findings by April.

Chair Ford

Won't we be able to get at least some feel of the recreational piece of it from the studies and some of those other studies.

Commissioner Distler

It is interesting, Dick, that you spoke about that. We had that same issue with the ferry advisory meeting that I attended and spoke about their concerns in Friday Harbor. Yes and No, because some of the information that we have is available for the O&D survey that was also conducted in a typical week in spring and a typical week in winter and fall.

Chair Ford

Oh I see.

Commissioner Distler

Because of the way that they segment their data, it's more based on size and type of fare paid rather than the actual quality, as opposed to the actual nature of the traveler.

Ms. Griffith

Just more immediately....the next steps will be to enter into contract negotiations, which we hope to wrap up very quickly. In that process we will negotiate a detailed work plan and timeline based on the RFP. We do not have to lock in precisely to the dates in the RFP, but I think on of the issues that Northwest raised...a concern...was that in order to get an accurate and adequate sample of the recreational seasonal users that to try to have this whole process wrapped up by August 1 may compromise the ability to do that, so we have talked informally with some Legislative and Governor's staff about the possibility of letting the survey process run until perhaps late September or early October at the latest. The reason the RFP identified an August 1 completion date originally is when we

drafted the RFP we were under the assumption that the Ferry Finance Study was not going to be able to start until the survey was completed. That since has been adjusted by direction of the JTC members, indicating that we can start that now, so we do not want to compromise the value or the credibility of the survey, so I think....if you all are open to that we probably need to assume that we may want to extend that August 1 deadline to allow for a better collection of the seasonal users.

Commissioner Distler

Dick, there is one other thing which I should note: .there will be two subject matter experts as part of the team, one on the sort of nuts and bolts of the evaluations and the analysis and the other more focused on the subject matter familiarity with ferries and such. That consultant has some current work going on with the PSRC passenger-only effort and we may want to engage in discussions with them as to a possible change in either the personnel involved or indeed substance of the sub-consultant. We don't think that it is a major problem, but it is something that Reema will be exploring as part of the contract process.

Commissioner Stedman

I have no problem with the timeline. I was just curious.

Chair Ford

I am going to ask you guys....I think that we can have a way discussion in October, but I'm going to probably lose you out here, so can we have, unless it's urgent to have another question can we have the vote. I'm starting to lose you.

Commissioner Stedman....Aye

Commissioner Moser.....Aye

Commissioner Forner....Aye

Commissioner Barnes.....Aye

Commissioner O'Neal.....Aye

Commissioner Distler.....Aye

Chair Ford

Okay I think that we have the unanimous vote. Thank you all...I'm going to have to get off....if you want to keep talking that's fine by me.

Ms. Griffith

Meeting adjourned.

Commissioner Distler

I move that the meeting be adjourned

Commissioner Forner

Meeting adjourned.

WASHINGTON STATE TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

DICK FORD, Chair

ELMIRA FORNER, Vice-Chair

EDWARD BARNES, Member

CAROL MOSER, Member

DAN O'NEAL, Member

ROBERT S. DISTLER, Member

DALE STEDMAN, Member

PAULA HAMMOND, Ex-Officio Member
Acting Secretary of Transportation

JENNIFER ZIEGLER, Governor's Office

ATTEST:

REEMA GRIFFITH, Executive Director

DATE OF APPROVAL